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The editors of *Afrika Spectrum* asked me to submit an article to this journal, from a French viewpoint, as a contribution to the ongoing debate on perspectives in African and area studies and, more particularly, to the special issue 40 (2005) 3.
Before proceeding to a more detailed discussion on the question of African studies past and present, and whether or not these are presently undergoing a crisis, I will begin by introducing a few remarks by way of a comment to various articles published in the last issue of this journal.

The emergence of African history

In France there is a tendency to respond differently to the changing perspectives on African studies than in Germany owing to the fact that the principal disciplines within the broad field of African studies have developed differently within the two countries. In France, for considerable time the principal disciplines in the field have been and, indeed, continue to be anthropology and geography. Anthropology provided a means for the various colonial administrations to examine and control the populations under their dominion, while geography was an extremely useful tool employed by the colonial state for administering and overseeing their territories. However, it was geographers who were the first to be receptive to the process of urbanization, which had seen such a remarkable development throughout the colonial and postcolonial 20th century. In contrast to these two major disciplines, African history was a latecomer only really to emerge in the early 1960s under the soleil des indépendances. For this reason, previous historical research on Africa was known only as 'colonial history' (a great anti-colonialist militant, Charles-Andre Julien, who was a specialist on the history of the Maghreb, was awarded the chair of 'colonial history' at the Sorbonne in 1947). Africa south of the Sahara simply did not fall within the compass of professional historical research. To be sure, famous 19th century explorers had travelled to Africa, such as Mungo Park, René Caillié, the Lander brothers, Hugh Clapperton, Heinrich Barth, to name just a few, as well as missionaries, such as Samuel Crowther, J.C. Taylor etc., and later anthropologists, among others Leo Frobenius and Siegfried F. Nadel, and they published fascinating reports and analyses. During the colonial period, French colonial administrators too were interested in pre-colonial history and wrote extensively on the subject, one of the most well-known being Maurice Delafosse who wrote on Haut-Sénégal-Niger (the title of a famous book published in 1912). Nevertheless, French professional historians commonly denied that African history existed at all, simply due to the relative lack of indigenous written languages and consequent deficit of archival material. During the early 1960s in France, the initial efforts among historians of Africa, whose work closely approximated that of the anthropologists, was to ensure that 'oral traditions', as they were then called, were acknowledged as valuable sources. Typically enough, the first two chairs of African history at the Sorbonne, created just after independence, were occupied not by trained historians but former colonial officers: Hubert Deschamps and his successor Yves Person for the modern history of Africa, and Raymond Mauny for the medieval history of Africa.1
This relative absence of African history in France prior to independence explains why historians who began specializing in African studies tended to read works primarily by scholars of other disciplines, chiefly those of anthropologists, geographers, sociologists,

linguists and political scientists (in the early 1960s there were still fewer economists specialized on Africa than historians). Thus, from the outset, for historians inter- or pluri-disciplinarity was the rule, if not a sheer necessity in African studies, and much more so than for the great majority of other French historians whose area of specialisation was French or European history.

As time went on, this state-of-affairs was to lead to a misconception: colonial history being rejected, history as a whole took considerable time to recuperate and secure for itself a normal status among africanists. As a result, even today, historians are more aware of 'africanist literature' produced in other disciplines than other social scientists are of historical writings produced on Africa. This becomes evident when taking a cursory glance at the bibliographies of recent books or dissertations, those proposed by historians being full of anthropological references while the reverse is unusual. The same can be said of the first serious historians of Africa, the primary example of which is the work of Henri Moniot. As an historian, he began his career as assistant professor with Balandier at the beginning of the 1960s.

Though in agreement with Patrick Chabal's explanation, which he elaborates in his (2005) article, I cannot help but wonder why he still finds it necessary to plead for an interdisciplinary dialogue. For, from the point of view of historians, this dialogue between historians and political scientists has long been underway, notably, in the fruitful dialogues between the CERI (Centre d'Études et de Recherches Internationales), directed for many years by the political scientist Jean-François Bayart, and historians whose research has been focused on power and the state in Africa; or consider the enduring bridge built between the two disciplines by the historians Achille Mbembe and Mamadou Diouf. Jean-Pierre Olivier de Sardan's contribution offers a perfectly succinct explanation of the history of anthropology in France, which shifted from a rather 'classical anthropology' (still practiced today as ethnology2) to the crisis of anthropology. According to him, the solution is a 'socio-anthropology of African public spaces', which Balandier already defined explicitly in earlier writings as 'political anthropology'.3

A privilege of African history: pluri-disciplinarity

For the last 10 to 15 years, however, African history has tended to take centre stage in French research in African studies. It has done so, probably due to its 'birth defect', which has entailed playing the game of interdisciplinarity: as a consequence, it may be that historians are more thoroughly trained in and informed about the entire body of literature on African affairs than their colleagues from other disciplines. This becomes apparent when comparing scholars of African history and economy: The former have learned their lesson, whereas the majority of the latter group still cultivate their ignorance by favouring global neo-liberal economic model building and the corresponding expert 'advice'. In my view, French anthropologists are in a state of crisis because they have failed to realize that their supremacy is on the decline. This pre-eminence was in force and especially valuable when Claude Meillassoux, Balandier's first disciple, submitted a number of fascinating proposals. Twenty years before Benedict Anderson did (Imagined Communities, 19834), he claimed that rural communities were entirely unequal (19605); he was also the first to assert the prominent productive role of African women6 twenty years prior to the emergence of African gender studies. He was bilingual and member of a brilliant group of young innovative Marxist intellectuals (Samir Amin, André Gunder Frank, Anouar Abdel Malek, etc.). Early on in his career, during the late 1960s and early 70s, he began translating his findings into English, thereby inspiring the Anglophone milieu to revise its knowledge of non-Western societies. Since then,

anthropology - if it ever really did exist in Africa - has all but disappeared among Francophone Africans, hence paving the way for an African sociology.
Today, for anthropologists 'africanism' became more or less synonymous with their own discipline, as recently Jean-Loup Amselle was to curiously assert.7 If ever 'africanism' was a discipline, it no longer is. Most French scholars and, above all, historians reject the concept of 'africanism' for reasons similar to Edward Said's rejection of 'orientalism' and in keeping with Valentin Mudimbe's reflections on 'the idea of Africa'.8 Following Patrick Chabal's argumentation, the question is rather whether or not African studies ought to be reduced to (cultural) area studies. To be sure, African studies require specialist knowledge and, as I have assumed in the above, interdisciplinarity. And this perforce means area studies, though the same can be said for studies conducted in any other part of the world, European studies included. Unfortunately, this idea is rather new and has not yet been adequately accepted by 'europeanists': affiliated subjects and postcolonial studies may have been in a position to assist us (even in cases in which, as has been observed by most authors in the recent issue of Afrika Spectrum, this has resulted in a number of exaggerations), understanding at least one simple idea, namely, that Europe and the West should also be studied as specific areas, no more and no less than any other area of the world. As anthropologists or historians trained in Germany or in France we ought to reflect on the fact that we are immerged in our own culture and cultural space and past, namely, the western European area. Owing to the fact that Western science came first, Western specialists in any social science of the Western world (history, political science, sociology, etc.) suffer from the unfortunate tendency of believing that European (or American, depending on the specialist's sub-area) understanding is synonymous with universality. What the 'empire writing back' (to paraphrase the title of a famous work) may have taught us, is to avoid the stubborn mistake by the West of taking the part for the whole. Julie Parle's paper (Parle/Waetjen 2005) is quite instructive in this respect, because it reminds us that this assumption is far from self-evident: what we, by which I mean persons educated in or by the Western world, and according to Western methods and rules, consider obvious is far from being so for other people. These people may have been taught by Westerners, such as is the case among South African youth educated by conservative and stubborn missionaries assisted, for all intents and purposes, by local criminal racists. They may also have inherited other cultural and ideological modes of thinking and understanding the world. As a consequence, we naturally think that by teaching them that African people are descendents of the original human species is to make them proud: Why? In the estimation of these students, teaching them African anteriority is equivalent to assimilating Africans to primitives. The assumption that older is better postulates a chronological concept of time. The contrary is the case: Among a number of other misconceptions, the locally inherited concept of time is not the same; past, present and future were not mathematically disconnected in African thought as has been the case in the West since the industrial revolution, i.e. 'modernization'. Students may also be afraid of a latent racism hidden beneath multi-cultural historical discourse.
This prompts two remarks: The first has to do with the necessity of comparativism. Area studies do not conflict with comparative studies both within and without the area under research. I would go further and claim that African studies have no other choice but to exercise comparative methodologies in conjunction with other cultural studies, including European studies. To employ the same example once again: What would be the significance of studying African urbanization, African cultivation or African religions without comparing them to other cities of the world, other peasantries or other religions, polytheisms, forms of Islam and forms of Christianity? Cities, religions or peasantries are not peculiar to Africa; general or regional African specificities may be appreciated only when contrasted to similar processes outside their given field. A splendid short essay on this question was recently proposed in French by an audacious historian of ancient Greece: Comparer l'incomparable9

(Detienne, 2000). Indeed, this is the reason why the research institute I directed a number of years ago, and which exists today under the modern title Sociétés en Développement dans l'Espace et le Temps (SEDET), resolutely endorses a comparative and pluri-disciplinary approach.10 Recent debates on the 'privatization of the state in Africa'11 have, moreover, already proven extremely useful in drawing attention towards similar tendencies in the West, discussing these under headings such as 'governance', 'new public management' or 'managerialism', and 'agency-governance', thus revealing recent and profound transformations in the modes of governance in various regions of the globe. Still more recently, historical debates are right in criticizing the very concept of governance, because management never by itself generated democracy. Good governance needs democracy, while only democracy may generate good governance (Cooper, 2005).

This does not represent a contradiction to Toyin Falola's (2005) assertion pointing, as it does, to the necessity for African historians to write national histories. His response addresses American trends of teaching foreign history rather than European approaches: national histories were created in Europe in the 19th century and, strictly speaking, were used to build European nations. As a French geographer claimed, while 'geography was first used to make war' (Lacoste, 1976), history was first used to build nations. And yet this is no reason for not writing scholarly works in geography or history! US-Americans recently discovered in their turn that 'people without history' (Wolf, 1980), or whose history has been studied less, are also historical people. Departments of history gave birth to an American specialty: indeed the intention of 'world history' is to teach a global survey of all non-Western histories by using comparative methods, which differ from previous research and teaching, i.e. studying cultural areas in isolation (as in Europe, for example, where there existed orientalism, africanism, etc.). I fully endorse Toyin's insistence on the necessity of including a study of national histories (rarely written in Africa12). One should not thereby neglect the national, the local or the regional, whose historiography cannot be achieved without also considering their counterpart, namely, globalisation and, as Charles Piot (1999) and Shalini Randeria/Sebastian Conrad (2002) have recently reminded us, their reciprocal entanglement: the more one enhances the global aspects, the more the local dimension reacts and is strengthened.

My second remark concerns the necessity of honouring, assisting and requesting African historians, according to Lonsdale's (2005) strong assertion, namely, that African studies can no longer survive in Europe (or in any other area of the world) in a unilateral mode. Furthermore, this is also the reason why anthropology must either accept becoming part of sociology or perish: research on Africa, which already implies pluri-disciplinarity, not only means that collective research in the form of teams of research scientists must supersede individual research. First and foremost, it also means cultivating a respect for what we are at times not trained to understand as well as we ought. The best anthropologists (anthropology supposedly being the discipline par excellence for understanding 'the other') remain foreigners.13 In short, as the former colonized viewpoint cannot be identical to the former colonizer's viewpoint, the 'developed' nations' viewpoint cannot be the same as that of the 'non'- or 'less developed' nations. There may occasionally be points at which the two significantly converge. And yet, even where this may be the case, we cannot maintain with complete conviction that this is owing to identical reasons. When we disagree (supposing, of course, that both partners are intellectually honest and competent), we cannot simply assert without providing rigorously compelling reasons that the other is wrong. The other also has his or her reasons, and before exercising criticism, we must first understand. However, understanding ought not to be confused with indulging nor even tolerating the other but rather respecting his or her thought and viewpoint. This principle is clearly illustrated by the recent polemical trends in France concerning the slave trades and colonialism. Most of the disputes (especially virulent between Caribbean citizens and traditional specialists of French hexagonal history) prove that both partners, all French citizens today, descendents of the

slaves' and the slave-traders', former colonized and colonizers, are often still incapable of adapting their respective memories to a common understanding of history.

Internationalism and cosmopolitism in African history14

Today researchers on Africa, whatever their origin, nationality and discipline, are fortunate: they are fortunate because international African studies have progressed enormously over the last 10 to 15 years. In the early 1960s, africanist scholars, mainly in Britain, though more so in France owing to the fact that Francophone scholarship arrived particularly late on the scene, were the maîtres de la brousse. They taught like masters of their trade and their students, including predominantly African students, were simply required to listen and learn. Today, things have changed significantly and, in fact, one might almost say the reverse is true. As a younger scholar recently told me:

Vous étiez, parce que Français, les maîtres de la brousse. Maintenant, nous, les jeunes, devons prouver que, bien que Français, nous pouvons écrire de la bonne histoire africaine.15

This is quite true. We are fortunate because today there is no other social science more cosmopolitan than African studies. It is cosmopolitan because, in addition to the classical and qualified European schools (British, French, German, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, etc.), 'African historical schools' established themselves in Dakar, in Dar es Salaam, in Harare, in Johannesburg ... Even though most of them are presently in poor condition due to a lack of funding and because of an ongoing brain-drain - many qualified African scholars having received leading positions at international universities, mostly, though not only in the US -, a number of these scholars still persevere with outstanding courage at African universities. Thus, to be taken seriously, any conference on African studies has to be international. A conference is inevitably cosmopolitan whenever held in the US, given the number of African, British, Canadian or other foreign scholars residing there for some time at least. This holds true in Europe as well, given the small number of national specialists. One may note here that the outstanding reputation of many Francophone scholars is due less to the fact that they are Francophone or Africans,16 but because they belong to a triple intellectual minority: because they are Africans, because they are Francophone and because they are Francophone Africans. Even more so than German scholars, they are 'betwixt and between', as Peter Probst (2005) would say. For this reason they are required to exert special efforts, compared to other international scholars. Whenever fortunate enough to travel abroad or after having joined the Diaspora, they are often the most linguistically gifted. As Africans, not only do they practice at least two African languages, but they do master to the level of fluency at least two major European languages, namely, English and French and, for a number of them, three (i.e. often including German). This is an exceptional scholarly resource, given the fact that problematic conceptualizations often differ or may be complementary depending on the language. Furthermore, while Anglophone and German speaking scholars tend to read less and less French publications (which, incidentally, prompted me to write this article in my rather hesitant French-influenced English), French scholars - and Francophone scholars who do not travel abroad - are in general far from being fluent in English. Thus, African scholars who have mastered a series of Western languages are able to profit from the broadest range of cultural trends, entangling their own with all the others they confront with. Such a resource may enable scholars to elaborate unusual perspectives not so easily accessible to their Western colleagues. This may be the reason why some of their writing was sometimes dismissed as 'afrocentrist', thus not written in a universalist perspective: This may clearly be a mistake, as I would contend that afrocentricity is not the same as afrocentrism.17

African studies in France and the Francophone world

I now come to the second part of the present paper, which discusses the specificities of French research on Africa. French research is both similar to and different from German or British equivalents. Based on e-mail discussions with German and other international colleagues and from comments recently appearing in German newspapers on the subject of French africanist studies, it would appear useful to explain a few of the major differences between German, Anglo-Saxon and French/Francophone institutions and the methods of organizing and financing social scientific research both on and within Africa.

The cradle of African pluri-disciplinarity: l'EHESS

French research on Africa, as I have indicated in the above, was globally innovative in the 1960s and early 1970s thanks to the initiatives of Fernand Braudel who, in imitation of American universities, established centres for area studies. This was at a time when, chairing the 6th section of EPHE (École Pratique des Hautes Études, now called the EHESS, École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales), he organized, among others, a Centre of African Studies along definite pluri-disciplinary guidelines and appointed a cluster of brilliant specialists. This group comprised of one or two sociologists (Georges Balandier and Paul Mercier and, occasionally, Jean Copans), geographers (Gilles Sautter and Jean-Pierre Raison), ethnologists (Denise Paulme), linguists (Pierre Alexandre and Pierre Lacroix), and historians (Henry Brunschwig), to name but a few. This was a time when the first and one of the most brilliant disciples of Balandier, Claude Meillassoux, specialized in economic anthropology, profoundly influenced a brilliant team of young scholars. They were to benefit both from a revival in Marxist thought and by the dynamic anthropological trend open to history and rather opposed to Levi-Strauss' structuralist mood. Unfortunately, from the 1980s on, each year one of these disciplines was no longer represented at the Centre. Presently, it is home to half a dozen anthropologists, sociologists, one historian (Elikia Mbokolo), and one geographer (Chantal Blanc-Pamard), the latter two doing their research mostly outside the Centre. No longer representing a varied choice in the social sciences, the Centre has by degrees lost its leading role in African studies.

African history and its emergence in French universities

Meanwhile, as mentioned above, African history was to emerge in three French universities, mainly in Paris (Universités Paris-1 and Paris-7) and in Aix-en-Provence, each having produced many graduates in the meantime. An increasing number have been recruited by different history departments and research institutes, which practice interdisciplinarity (such as the CEAN, Centre d'Étude d'Afrique Noire, for political sciences in Bordeaux). Whereas in the 1960s there were only two full professors in African history in France, there are now more than half a dozen; three or four times more assistant professors (with a very small minority of Francophone African scholars18) now have positions at various universities. In addition, a number of younger researchers have been appointed by different research institutes (mainly the CNRS, Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique). Presently, there are perhaps over a dozen historians of Africa at the CNRS whereas, for many years, there was only one, then later two (Jean-Pierre Chrétien, now retired, and Michel Cahen, and later Gérard Prunier). For quite some time, just like former ORSTOM (now IRD19), the CNRS appointed almost exclusively anthropologists and linguists to carry out research on non-Western people. The recent increase in the appointment of historians indicates a positive development and will

probably continue since more departments will raise the number of students and thus necessitate the creation of additional positions.
This is not the place to elaborate an explanation as to how and in which ways French research on Africa is presently undergoing a process of thoroughgoing renewal, and why history appears to be a leading discipline.20 Clearly, the recent threats against African history stemming from French political realms are a powerful incentive for historians to oppose a potential restriction to their freedom of teaching and research.21 Workshops, conferences, articles and books are proliferating on the history of the slave trades and slavery, and on the history of French colonization. Even if, for the time being, things appear rather confusing, it is also a period of enhanced consciousness with respect to the general responsibilities of modern historians, and of historians of African history in particular. No doubt, this will bring about fascinating further developments.
Nevertheless, rather than claiming a typical French cocorico, I would prefer to insist on the difficulties and defects of recent and current research in Africa, which contributes to an understanding of the present disarray.

A French peculiarity: ORSTOM

For years, the chief defect of French research on Africa has been its essentially parochial character. The key problem has been the financing of research for social sciences. I am not referring to applied research here, such as agronomy, economy, medicine or hydrology which, after independence, was to inherit the various institutes created in the late years of colonization, generally after World War II. The majority of these institutes continued and housed several hundred French research scientists settled in former colonies. The most renowned of these institutes is the ORSTOM, now IRD.22 ORSTOM had a major defect though: it carried out French research in former African colonies which, for many years, had used African nationals only as informers and assistants.23 ORSTOM had its own staff and personnel, most of which were recruited in France by a competitive application procedure, and by screening committees made up of peers. The staff enjoyed excellent working conditions and pay (having inherited from the colonial period, like other French overseas civil servants, the so-called prime d'éloignement, making theirs a salary clearly superior to the equivalent in France). ORSTOM became known as a kind of privileged oasis in the midst of African difficulties. Social scientists did not number among the majority, and were mainly recruited from among anthropologists and geographers. One of the legacies of the colonial period was that for considerable time only one historian was appointed from a total of approximately one hundred social scientists ... Nevertheless, much more so than it is today, it was a source of help for young visiting research scientists. E.g. on my first visits to Africa in 1965 and 1967, I was to profit greatly from the organisation's assistance, which provided me with accommodation and even a car during my stay in a number of cities (Libreville, Brazzaville, Bangui, Abidjan, Yaounde). Most young anthropologists and geographers were given a position at ORSTOM for at least a couple of years to complete their dissertations, and often longer, which then later entitled them to apply for a university position. The resident teams for several years in the late 1960s and early 1970s, e.g. in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, included such personalities as Marc Augé, Emmanuel Terray, Pierre Étienne and later Jean-Pierre Dozon and Jean-Pierre Chauveau, or the geographers Gilles Sautter in Congo or Jean-Pierre Raison in Madagascar. Most ORSTOM members working in the social sciences were generous and attentive to what was then called the Third World; Emmanuel Terray was even expelled from Côte d'Ivoire for not paying due respect to Houphouët-Boigny's regime ... Nevertheless, neo-colonial instincts or attitudes were still partly present among the members of this expatriated community who had a tendency to live among themselves ...

Furthermore, French university departments organized progressively their collaborations with African counterparts, although their financial resources were minimal, and continue to be when compared with those of ORSTOM. Scientific collaboration with ORSTOM sometimes proved difficult precisely because the institution did not understand why universities would undertake research with such limited resources at their disposal. What ORSTOM did not realize, however, as long as it was not allowed to propose scholarships to a few graduate students, is that such highly motivated, often enthusiastic young research scientists, working in an equally motivated team, at times may achieve much more with much less funding than their professional counterparts ...

Financing: a key problem

Whatever else may be the case, in France financing, especially in historical science, remains a perennial problem. There are very few funding and research foundations sponsored by the private sector. For many years, the only such institute was the Maison des Sciences de l'Homme, also established by Fernand Braudel with the assistance of Clemens Heller, who was particularly influenced by the American approach. Our French Jacobinism provides a national tradition frequently misunderstood in Anglo-Saxon regions: Public financing is considered to be fair because it is supposedly neutral. French laws guarantee its independence from the private sector, while private financing appears dubious and often seems compromised by promoting particular vested interests. French attitudes are therefore diametrically opposed to the prevailing stance in America, which views public financing as something dubious, whereas private financing is considered fair precisely because it is independent of the state and consequently not shackled to public policy and the political system, subject as it is to majority opinion. Be that as it may, fair financing, either private or public, depends on particular circumstances, conditions, and individuals.
All French universities are under the jurisdiction of the French Ministry of Education and so the sole source of funding for the social sciences comes from the Ministry of National Education and the CNRS, itself financed by the state (Ministry of Research). Today, French universities, all of which are national public institutions,24 enter into a four year contractual agreement negotiated with these two ministries. The contract with the Paris-7-university, my home university, for example, includes a regular funding for research exchange programmes in cooperation with various African universities. It mainly offers grants for graduate exchange programmes from and to Africa, and for funding one or two African scholars who have regular teaching positions in African universities for a couple of months a year. Of course, this has significantly enhanced scientific relations between the laboratoire SEDET, co-financed by the university and the CNRS, and its counterparts in Dakar or elsewhere. The condition was that our department entered into an agreement with the African university concerned in this exchange, an agreement which must be nationally accredited.
It is at this stage that the former Ministry of Cooperation, now incorporated into the Foreign Office, interferes. For many years, it was the Ministry of Cooperation, which was directly affiliated to the former Ministry of Colonies and, for a short period, known as Communauté (1958-1960), which was responsible for managing all questions relating to the former African colonies, i.e. Africa South of the Sahara and Madagascar.25 In ministerial jargon these were known as les pays du champ, and prone to neo-colonial prejudice ...
Departments and institutes of research in French universities enter into direct scholarly agreements with their counterparts in African universities. Until recently, most if not all such agreements were concluded with Francophone universities. French universities have indeed insufficient financial resources to support these agreements or, more precisely, through the ministry of Foreign Affairs, they prefer to finance more prestigious connections with American universities. As for Africa, any agreement was not only to be approved by the

Ministry of Cooperation (on face value, this was always accepted without any difficulty since, in most cases, this ministry was not permitted to interfere with questions relating to education) but, more importantly, was obliged to obtain a grant from this same Ministry. A far less simple task indeed!

What of 'Françafrique'?

May we infer from this, that universities were necessarily compromised by Françafrique scandals? The answer is clearly no and for two reasons:

- The first is that, while a ministry of cooperation was certainly not a neutral choice, most Françafrique negotiations and scandals did not originate from within this ministry, but within another organisation, another descendent of the short lived Communauté: the Direction des Affaires Africaines, under direct supervision of the president's office, and even housed in the Élysée. Its special executive director is often in political competition with the Ministry of Cooperation. This was the political side of the affair, somewhat independently of the educational responsibilities of the ministry which, for the most part, was granted large autonomy.

- The second reason is that in the Ministry of Cooperation, as elsewhere in academic financing, the application, examination and obtaining of grants was dependent upon peer review procedures (French research institutes located in foreign states must be similarly approved though they are financed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs). The corresponding committees are most usually staffed with scholars of good reputation in the field. In fact, methods do not differ from those used by private foundations and international standards of peer review. If a strong proposal is submitted, if a previous experience of collaboration proved efficient and scientifically solid, there is no reason for the grant to be denied ; if it should so happen that an application is denied for possible political or any other (non scientific) reasons, protests by scholars are generally strong enough to correct unacceptable decisions or insufficient funding. This game and the struggles involved in obtaining a grant for a scientific programme may be the same as anywhere else ...

The foundation of an independent African centre of research: the 'École de Dakar'

Nevertheless, networks of research scientists and institutions were, of course, built through these relationships. This was all the more so because, even though every Francophone state opened at least one university,26 no graduate studies existed at Francophone universities for most of the social sciences until the mid 1970s. Consequently, any Francophone African student intending to graduate in African history was obliged to travel to France to prepare his dissertation at a French university, mainly Paris-1, Paris-7, or Aix-en-Provence (there were very few female students if any).
This explains the importance of Boubacar Barry's initiative, when he created a graduate studies programme in history at Dakar. The problem was that African universities were structured on the French model: to become a full Professor required that the candidate had written a chef d'œuvre called thèse d'État (no longer required in France though still obligatory at African universities) which took usually at least ten years to complete. The result was that, in the 1970s, no African historian27 who taught at very demanding institutions had obtained this grade. Consequently, there were no directeurs de recherche (permitted to supervise PhD students), although there existed an abundance of competent research scientists.
Boubacar Barry then came up with an interesting idea: to have myself accepted by the university of Dakar's scientific council as an official directeur de recherche (supervisor).

Boubacar still is proud in claiming that he was the only one of his generation to have taken degree courses in Africa from start to finish: his former supervisor, Yves Person, began as a coopérant at the University of Dakar. Boubacar Barry came to Paris for a week, only to defend his first dissertation or thèse de troisième cycle, as it was then called. I first met him as a member of his defence jury.

I was invited to the department of history for six weeks a year for a period of about ten years to teach, discuss with my colleagues and collaborate. My chief responsibility was to sign official papers. Throughout the year my Senegalese colleagues did all the effective work of supervising most of the graduate students. This was the initial stage of what Boubacar was to nickname the African École de Dakar, now renowned throughout Africa and beyond. A great and very poignant moment occurred in the mid 1980s, when two of the first thèses d'État were defended at the University of Dakar by Abdoulaye Bathily and Boubacar Barry himself.28 Tutelage by French supervisors was definitively a thing of the past. Fortunately collective research continued and a common effort remained for guaranteeing a sustained financing. This was, and thirty years later continues to be, an endless and difficult struggle since an increasing amount of the funding is directly drawn from the French Embassy whose budget is annually shrinking.

Now, with at least three successive generations of Senegalese historians, this long cooperation is a good example of the progressive effect of the building of scholarly networks. Elsewhere (in Burkina-Faso, Niger, Benin, Guinea, Congo, Rwanda or Chad), what happened in Dakar as a result of the cooperation, frequently occurred at the beginning of a research cooperation in history: the exchange of graduate students.29 For most African universities, the necessity for African students to come to France to prepare their dissertation lasted much longer. While the student's choice of a graduate school may have been arbitrary or the result of previous student and scholar networks or even ideological preferences. The choice may also have been based on the scientific reputation of the centre: Paris-7's graduate school of African studies received two awards, in 1988 the CNRS prize for the best dissertation of the year (from all disciplines), and in 1987 the Pan-African Noma Award for the best work published on the African continent (from all languages and all disciplines).30

To be sure, while the French system favoured the formation of scientific networks, they ought not be assimilated to French political networks and do operate quite differently. The recent deluge of protests by French historians against any political intervention may be quite revealing: indeed, traditionally, the state is only supposed to interfere minimally with the nature and modes of research in the social sciences.31 For French scholars, African students were, like their French counterparts, first and foremost students, whatever their ideological persuasion.

Things have changed considerably since then. Public funding continues and yet research remains free and new experiences have proven very positive. For example, in 2000, a cross-cultural programme was financed by the French embassy in Mali for more than three years. The objective was to experiment with a historical regard croisé based on the close collaboration of 20 Malian and French scholars, who organized a series of mixed (Malian and French) sub-teams, each of them appointing specialists and graduate students from various social sciences. For three years they met and discussed twice annually, once in France and once in Bamako, and the fieldwork was carried out under the dual supervision of Professors Pierre Boilley in France, and Doulaye Konaté in Mali. The aim was to try and define a common programme for interpreting and writing on varied episodes in Mali history, including colonialism, decolonization, wars, riots, etc. A book summarizing the results recently appeared, discussing the problems, namely, how difficult it was to initiate a free and honest dialogue and to establish progressive, mutual understanding.32

However, the most damaging effect of the French approach to cooperation almost led to a complete paralysis in French research in other areas than Francophone ones, simply due to a

lack of funding. French 'africanists' carrying out fieldwork in other linguistic areas represented an exception and not the rule. Michel Cahen managed to do research in Mozambique, initially at his own expense, soon after which he was offered a chair at CNRS. Daniel Bach was also in a similar position in Nigeria, and the same holds true for Gérard Prunier a few years later in Sudan. These conditions persisted for many years. This situation began to change only about ten to twenty years ago, when our Foreign Office decided (obviously for political reasons) to create French Institutes of Research in Anglophone areas along similar lines to other institutes that had long since been established elsewhere (for example, in Egypt, Lebanon, Greece or Italy). There are now three of them in Africa South of the Sahara: in Nairobi (Kenya), in Lagos (Nigeria), and in Johannesburg (South Africa). Their task is to foster collaboration with local universities and to promote Franco-African research and scientific exchange at a regional level. This represented a formidable impulse for the internationalization of African studies in France, even though there have been certain drawbacks. It is essential for these centres to resist French diplomatic attempts to control affairs - and they are usually successful in their efforts -, an intrusion that no serious French research scientist is likely to accept easily. And yet, the heritage of Francophone paternalism is still to be felt here. Ironically, the only part of the world where such French research institutes do not exist happens to be Francophone Africa!

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1 At the time, the only specialist trained in history was Henri Brunschwig, a former specialist of German history who later transferred to African history by way of German colonial history. Braudel called him to the EPHE in 1962. This is not the place to expound on the reasons for African history having arrived so late in France (it began almost one generation later than in Britain, when the two first chairs, given to John Fage and Roland Oliver, were created in 1947). Part of the reason for this may be that 'colonial history' was over after independence: for the British Empire the significant date came with Indian independence in 1947, while French West African and French Equatorial African independence occurred as late as 1960. An additional factor is that higher education in French Africa was considerably less developed than it was in some parts of Anglophone Africa (at least in British West Africa, and South Africa). A recent dissertation, written by Sophie Dulucq (2005, Université Paris-7), is devoted to this aspect of French africanist historiography (forthcoming publication by the University of Toulouse).

2 The major introductory book for africanists at the beginning of the 1960s, also at the École Pratique des Hautes Études, now EHESS, when I began training for my fieldwork, was still the 1948 translation of Hermann Baumann's, Richard Thurnwald's, and Diedrich Westermann's Völkerkunde von Afrika, Essen 1940. The French translation ignored the section written by Thurnwald, probably because it was too openly anti-French. Apparently, no French specialist at the time noticed the Nazi bias running through this book, which was written in Austria, in 1940. This bias has been rightly pointed out in Peter Probst's article (Probst 2005).

3 Title of a seminal and marvelous short essay published by Georges Balandier, Anthropologie politique, Paris, Presses universitaires de France, 1967.

4 Translated in French (1996) with the title: L'imaginaire national. Réflexions sur l'origine et l'essor du nationalisme. Paris: La Découverte.

5 Balandier (1960): Essai sur l'interprétation du phénomène économique dans les sociétés d'autosubsistance. Cahiers d'Études Africaines 1960 (4): 38-67.

6 Balandier (1975): Femmes greniers et capitaux. Paris: Maspero. Translated in English (1981): Maidens, meal, and money: capitalism and the domestic community. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

7 Writing this in his otherwise conceptually most interesting book, I suspect he wishes to speak pro-domo and assert that anthropology still remains 'the' leading discipline in African studies, a claim which is somewhat disputed in France. Cf. Jean-Loup Amselle 2001.
8 Edward W. Saïd (1978): Orientalism. Translated (1980): L'Orientalisme: l'Orient créé par l'Occident. Paris : Seuil. Valentin Mudimbe, The Invention of Africa. Gnosis, Philosophy, and the Order of Knowledge, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1988.
9 For more details, see Coquery-Vidrovitch (2004).
10 The purpose of the Laboratoire Tiers-Mondes, now SEDET, which appoints predominantly historians and geographers, also including sociologists and political scientists, is to focus on various cultural areas (Africa south of the Sahara and Madagascar, the Maghreb and the Middle East, Eastern Asia and China, the Caribbean area, and Latin America), by insisting on the inclusion of historical processes. The laboratoire appoints 40 specialists trained in various languages (from Chinese or Cambodgian to Merina, Swahili, Moore, Wolof, Arabic or Spanish). The primary topics include: urbanization, state-building, migrations, gender studies, and cross-cultural trends (cultural metissage). From the outset (1978-1981), when the great geographer Jean Dresch encouraged and assisted me in founding the institute, its existence, which contradicts institutional habits of isolating disciplines and cultural areas, has been a challenge, difficult to realize and still more difficult to gain recognition by our academic authorities.
11 As the first issue of the excellent journal Critique internationale from CERI, under the direction of Béatrice Hibou, has sought to describe. One may refer to the articles by Hibou herself (Béatrice Hibou, 1998) and esp. by Luc Rouban (1998)
12 However, see the renowned but today vanishing traditions and even school of historical scholarship in Zimbabwe: cf. Terence Ranger (2004), and the emergence of national histories written by modern African historians (e.g. on Senegal by Mamadou Diouf and Congo by Didier Gondola, 2005).
13 Taken to an extreme, this problem was thoroughly reflected in Till Förster's article on Seeing and Observing (2001).
14 The emerging idea of the necessity of cosmopolitism in modern multicultural societies is elaborated further by Achille Mbembe (2004).
15 Quoting Florence Bernault, today full Professor at Madison, Wisconsin University, where she has succeeded Jan Vansina's.
16 Not all Francophone scholars are Africans or French: we may cite, among others, Prof. Bogumil Jewsiewicki who teaches at the Université Laval, Québec, Canada.
17 Clearly, this does not mean that I indiscriminately accept all kinds of 'afrocentrism'. I simply suggest that one should wait and see ... Indeed most Westerners, including scholars and perhaps especially historians, suffer from a temptation to instinctively think that knowledge and wisdom are theirs independently of their own particular viewpoint: I would advise caution in this regard and urge to consider that one of the few things really universal may indeed be relativity.
18 Until recently (within the last 10 years), the permanent appointment to French universities of foreign scholars was not possible, the positions being part of the French fonction publique, namely, reserved for French citizens. The longest contract permitted to a foreign faculty member was 4 years. This changed for all nationalities several years before the European community law made it compulsory for European citizens.
19 The 'Office de la Recherche Scientifique et Technique d'Outre-Mer' was renamed in 1999 the 'Institut de Recherche pour le Développement'.
20 I recently provided an explanation a propos African history of urbanization, in an article submitted to the French periodical Annales.
21 As most readers probably know, the detonateur was a clause in a law introduced in February 2005, when recommending that historians teach 'les aspects positifs de la

colonisation française [...] en Algérie' at school (positive aspects of French colonialism in Algeria). Meanwhile, the extreme right following Le Pen is growing in the south of France, where French pieds-noirs expelled from independent Algeria settled en masse, and where commemorative monuments and even 'memorials' glorifying French memory during the Algerian war have already been erected. This goes along with an eruption of ultra reactionary nationalism directed against French workers of migrant descent, many of whom came from Africa (Maghreb and Africa south of the Sahara). Recent violent events in Paris banlieues (November 2005) reveal the 'colonial fracture' inherited from this disputable past. Africa Today is preparing a special issue on this question.

22 Cf. footnote 20.

23 As a measure of progress, ORSTOM diversified and expanded beyond its former colonial dominion, for example, to Latin America and Asia.

24 Except two, both of which are located in Paris: the université catholique (which is private because the state cannot manage any religious institution), with a few other minor Catholic universities in other cities, which mainly teach theology and religious philosophy. Theology is only taught in one public university, namely, in Strasbourg, since Alsace was not French at the time the enactment of the loi de séparation de l'Église et de l'État in 1905. A private university was recently founded by Charles Pasqua, a conservative politician. It has few students and is scarcely known but for its high fees ... And, because it is not public, it is not 'guaranteed' by the state (only public universities being permitted to issue 'national' diploma, other, mostly catholic academic institutions, circumvent this regulation by establishing agreements with some public universities).

25 As for the former colonial territories in the Maghreb, Algeria was dependent from the Ministère de l'intérieur, and the former protectorates (Tunisia and Morocco) were dependent from the Foreign Office.

26 Today there are two universities in Senegal, three in Côte d'Ivoire, and half a dozen in Cameroon, to name but a few.

27 Except Cheikh Anta Diop, who was never authorized by President Senghor to teach at the university which, ironically, received his name, and Abdoulaye Ly, an excellent historian but who dedicated himself to politics.

28 Meanwhile, two other Senegalese defended their thèses d'État in France. One or two had been defended in Dakar before independence, but this was at a time when the University of Dakar was still dependent on the University of Bordeaux in France.

29 Several of these agreements were never financed by the Ministry of Cooperation: as a result we had to rely completely on the assistance of the Université Paris-7. Curiously, the agreement with the university of Rwanda (in place prior to the 1994 massacre - I myself taught there for one month in 1985) was initiated by the French cultural counsellor who taught philosophy. She did not want the universities of Burundi and Rwanda to cooperate with the same French universities. Because Burundi was connected with Paris-1, she agreed to finance an exchange programme only between Paris-7 and Kigali, where the social sciences faculty was located at the time. As there was more competence in Paris-1, we managed to establish co-directorships and all the jury comprised specialists of the interlacustrine area, both from Paris-1 (Jean-Pierre Chrétien) and the CNRS (Claudine Vidal).

30 The first was given to Alpha Gado Boureima from Niger for his dissertation on the history of Sahelian droughts in the 18th century; the second to Pierre Kipré for his thèse d'État on the history of colonial urbanization in the Ivory Coast. In both cases, the topics appeared to be innovative not only in Francophone African historiography.

31 And very little with the sciences dures, except by way of financing (far greater than that allocated to the social sciences - almost without comparison, in this latter case).

32 GEMDEV 2005: Mali-France. Regards sur une histoire partagée. Paris/Bamako Donniya-Karthala.